

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CAIRO 11861 221541Z

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C O N F I T H E N T I A L CAIRO 11861

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AFSI OGEN EG

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE RELOCATION OFFSI ARABIC LANGUAGE
PROGRAM TO CAIRO

REF STATE 275245 (NOTAL)

1. FSI DIRECTOR SOLLENBERGER ALWAYS WELCOME,
THOUGH I AM DEVELOPING SOME RESERVATIONS ABOUT
HAVING ARABIC LANGUAGE TRAINING CONDUCTED IN
CAIRO FOR REASONS CITED BELOW.

2. FIRST, ALTHOUGH REFTEL SUGGESTS DEP CONSIDERS
CAIRO MOST FEASIBLE PERMANENT SITE FOR ARABIC TRAINING,
I GET IMPRESSION THAT NEITHER FSIARABIC TRAINING
DIRECTOR NOR LANGUAGE TRAINEES ACCEPT THIS AND THAT
TUNIS AND WASHINGTON STILL FIGURE PROMINANTLY AS
ALTERNATIVE SITES. MY ORIGINAL OFFER TO ACCEPT LANGUAGE
STUDENTS HERE WAS PREDICATED ON WHAT I UNDERSTAND TO BE
DEPT'S DESIRE TO TURN OUT COMPETENT ARABISTS WITHIN
PERIOD ALLOTTED FOR SUCH TRAINING. OPPORTUNITY TO
STUDY IN ARAB, AS OPPOSED TO FRENCHIFIED BEIRUT
ENVIRONMENT, COUPLED WITH INCIDENTAL ADVANTAGE OF
LEARNING SOMETHING OF EGYPT, CENTER OF ARAB
WORLD, SEEMED TO ME TO MAKE GOOD SENSE. I WISH,
HOWEVER, TO MAKE CLEAR THAT I AM NOT VYING WITH
ANYONE TO HAVE PROGRAM HERE. IF ANOTHER SITE IS
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PAGE 02 CAIRO 11861 221541Z

CHOSEN MORE ACCEPTABLE TO PROGRAM DIRECTORS FOR

ADMINISTRATIVE REASONS, IT WOULD GIVE ME NO HEARTACHE AND WOULD SPARE POST MANY ADMINISTRATIVE BURDENS.

3. SECOND, I AM AGAINST ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT FSI PROGRAM IN CAIRO. SUCH A PROGRAM WOULD UNDERMINE MY LONGSTANDING PURPOSE OF MAINTAINING A LOW PROFILE, SINCE IT WOULD MEAN ANOTHER ARM OF EMBASSY ESTABLISHED WITH LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO CONTRIBUTE NOTHING TO OUR IMPORTANT MISSION IN EGYPT. THIS OPTION WAS RAISED IN EMBASSY ADMINISTRATIVE MESSAGE SENT DURING MY ABSENCE IN REPLY TO QUESTION IN DEPT MESSAGE AND SHOULD HAVE BEEN SCOTCHED AT THAT TIME. THIS WAS NOT THE CONCEPT FOR WHICH WE OBTAINED APPROVAL FROM FAHMY. I MADE MY INITIAL OFFER TO HAVE PROGRAM MOVE HERE AFTER MUCH SOUL-SEARCHING ABOUT PROFILE PROBLEM, BUT IN BELIEF THAT MAXIMUM INTEGRATION INTO EXISTING AUC PROGRAM WOULD MAKE PROFILE ASPECTS AS LEAST SOMEWHAT MORE MANGEABLE. TRAINEES WOULD THEN BE PART OF THE GENERAL STUDENT BODY RATHER THAN A TOTALLY SEPARATE GROUP COMPLETE WITH EDIFICE, DIRECTOR AND STAFF TO WHICH ALL COULD POINT AND ABOUT WHICH QUESTIONS WOULD CERTAINLY BE RAISED.

4. THIRD, I UNDERSTAND DIRECTOR SMITH REMAINS STRONGLY OPPOSED TO COMING TO CAIRO. ALTHOUGH FROM WHAT I GATHER HE MAY HAVE MISREPRESENTED SOME ASPECTS OF THE AUC PROGRAM, I RESPECT HIS LOYALTY TO STAFF AND RECOGNIZE HIS CONCERNS. I WOULD NOT WANT SMITH TO COME TO DIRTY, CROWDED, SMELLY CAIRO UNLESS HE BELIEVES CAIRO IS MORE APPROPRIATE PLACE TO STUDY ARABIC THAN TUNIS OR WASHINGTON.

5. FOURTH, I AM DISTURBED ABOUT NORLAND, MARTHINSEN REPORT OF FSI STUDENT REACTIONS AS ASCERTAINED IN TUNIS (CAIRO 11828). I CAN READILY UNDERSTAND STUDENT DISQUIET OVER THEIR UNSETTLED SITUATION AND FEEL FOR THEM. THE LAST THING I NEED, HOWEVER, IS TO HAVE A GROUP OF 30 DISGRUNTLED STUDENTS DESCEND ON MY OVER-WORKED ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF AND TRANSFER THEIR UNHAPPINESS HERE. LET US FACE IT. LIVING CONDITIONS
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 CAIRO 11861 221541Z

IN CAIRO ARE NOT LIKE THOSE IN BEIRUT. ADDITIONALLY, THIS POST DOES NOT HAVE THE INFRASTRUCTURE, INCLUDING LARGE COMMISSARY, THAT BEIRUT HAS OR AT LEAST HAD. AS ALREADY STATED IN CAIRO 11801, BEST WE COULD DO IS TO HOUSE BULK OF STUDENT BODY IN APRATMENT HOUSES IN ORDER TO MINIMIZE BURDEN ON SMALL GSO STAFF. THIS IS PERHAPS NOT THE WAY FSI ARABIC LANGUAGE STUDENTS HAVE BEEN ACCUSTOMED TO LIVING AND I CAN UNDERSTAND

HOW IT COULD CAUSE NEW MORALE PROBLEMS. I CANNOT AFFORD, HOWEVER, TO HAVE MY SMALL STAFF DIVERTED FROM ITS HIGHLY SENSITIVE, CRITICAL MISSION IN EGYPT TO SATISFY DEMANDS OF 30-ODD ARABIC LANGUAGE TRAINEES. APART FROM MY WILLINGNESS TO HAVE LANGUAGE COORDINATOR ATTACHED TO EMBASSY AS LANGUAGE OFFICER, I DO NOT WANT MORE ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF.

6. FIFTH, THERE IS PROBLEM OF THE PRESENT FSI INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF. I HAVE DEEPEST SYMPATHY FOR THAT ASPECT, BUT MUST STATE CATEGORICALLY THAT THERE IS NO WAY IN WHICH LEBANESE AND PALESTINIAN INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF CAN BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE IN CAIRO FOR ANY LENGTH OF TIME. AUC WILL SIMPLY HAVE TO FIND ADDITIONAL STAFF, WHICH IS NOT DIFFICULT. IT WOULD GIVE ME GREAT PROBLEMS WITH EGYPTIAN OFFICIALDOM TO IMPORT LEBANESE AND PALESTINIAN INSTRUCTORS TO TEACH ARABIC IN EGYPT. IF THE JOBS OF THESE LONG-TIME EMPLOYEES CAN BE SALVAGED BY PERMANENT RELOCATION ELSEWHERE, OTHER OPTIONS SHOULD PERHAPS BE RECONSIDERED.

7. FINALLY, THERE IS BEDAW'S OBVIOUS OPPOSITION REPORTED ELSEWHERE. HE AND SMITH HAVE A COMMONALITY OF VIEWS, ALTHOUGH THEIR REASONS MAY BE DIFFERENT. BEDAWI IS MEMBER OF AUC TEACHING STAFF, NOT AN AUC POLICYMAKER. FURTHER, BASED ON PREVIOUS TALKS WITH AUC PRESIDENT BYRD, I HAVE IMPRESSION THAT BEDAWI WAS TALKING FOR HIMSELF AND THAT BYRD IS PREPARED IN PRINCIPLE TO TAKE OUR PEOPLE PROVIDED AUC BOARD APPROVES. WE WOULD HAVE TO DO A BIT OF ADVANCE WORK ON SOME OF MORE IMAGINATIVE AUC BOARD DIRECTORS, SUCH A CHUCK REDLAND, CHARLIE YOST, LUKE BATTLE AND PERHAPS OTHERS. AS POINTED OUT PARA 4 E
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PAGE 04 CAIRO 11861 221541Z

REFTEL, I AGREE THAT FSI MONITORING IS MOST DIFFICULT PART OF ARRANGEMENTS AND ONE THAT NEEDS BE FULLY CLARIFIED BY QUALIFIED FSI LINGUIST WERE THE GROUP TO COME HERE.

8. IF WE ARE TO CONTINUE DISCUSSIONS WITH AUC, I WANT TO BE SURE WE ARE READING FROM THE SAME SCRIPT. I AM MEETING WITH BYRD TOMORROW FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION OF SUBJECT.
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